

FROM THE PASTOR: Focus on one fire (so to speak)

As you may know, I am a fan of Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber, ELCA pastor, theologian, author, and most recently called as Pastor of Public Witness by the Rocky Mountain Synod. She has a blog, and often offers incredible insight into our faith and life. Most recently, she wrote: “If you can’t take it anymore, there’s a reason. It’s all too much.” In the essay (which she gave permission

to share) she writes:

“I used to live in a very old apartment building with super sketchy electrical wiring. Were I to audaciously assume my hair drier could run while my stereo was on, I would once again find myself opening the grey metal fuse box next to the refrigerator and flipping the breaker. My apartment had been built at a time when there were no electric hair driers, and the system shut down when modernity asked too much of it.

I think of that fuse box often these days, because friends, I just do not think our psyches were developed to hold, feel and respond to everything coming at them right now; every tragedy, injustice, sorrow and natural disaster happening to every human across the entire planet, in real time every minute of every day. The human heart and spirit were developed to be able to hold, feel and respond to any tragedy, injustice, sorrow or natural disaster that was happening IN OUR VILLAGE.

So my emotional circuit breaker keeps overloading because the hardware was built for an older time.” (I want to offer an Amen here.) “And yet, when I check social media it feels like there are voices say-ing “if you aren’t talking about, doing something about, performatively posting about ___(fill in the blank)___ then you are an irredeemably callous, privileged, bigot who IS PART OF THE PROBLEM” and when I am someone who does actually care about human suffering and injustice (someone who feels every picture I see, and story I read) it leaves me feeling (crazy bad). I am left with wondering: am I doing enough, sacrificing enough, giving enough, saying enough about all the horrible things right now to think of myself as a good person and subsequently silence the accusing voice in my head? No. The answer is always no. No I am not. Nor could I. Because no matter what I do the goal of “enough” is just as far as when I started.

And yet doing nothing is hardly the answer. ... So I try and remember, 1. We are still living through a global pandemic and that means the baseline of anxiety and grief is higher than ever and shared by every-one. 2. The world is on fire literally and metaphorically. But 3. I only have so much water in my bucket to help with the fires. The more exposure I have to the fires I have NO WATER to fight, the more likely I am to get so burned, and inhale so much smoke that I cannot help anymore with the fires close enough to fight once my bucket is full again.

So I try and tell myself that It’s ok to focus on one fire. ... If immigration reform is yours to do, if it is the fire you have water to throw on, (thank you! and...) that is enough.” Or if it’s climate change, or domestic violence, or hunger, or Focus on one thing, and do something.

“I’m not saying we should put our heads in the sand, I’m saying that if your circuits are over-whelmed there’s a reason and the reason isn’t because you are heartless, it’s because there is not a human heart on this planet that can bear all of what it happening right now. So thank you for being a person who cares about and responds” to something.

I so appreciated Pastor Nadia’s image of an overloaded fuse box ... I know I’ve felt that. And I appreciated the encouragement to keep doing something, to the glory of God, as part of the solution, and in response to God’s love.

Whatever you choose ... thank you, thank you for your partnership in ministry. And many thanks to Pastor Nadia for your gracious insight.

God’s grace and peace, may it surround in the midst... *Pastor Karen*

